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ABSTRACT

The ability to empathize with clients or students is a prime factor in the counselor's or teacher's success. Affective sensitivity, or acuteness in detecting and describing the emotions of others, is a critical component of empathy. It has generally been assumed that the masculine orientation toward instrumental or cognitive focus on problem solving is less conducive to empathy than is the feminine inclination toward expressive and affective concern for others. In this study, male and female graduate students in counseling and education were tested for their reaction to and interpretation of videotaped personal encounters. Results indicated that, while affective sensitivity and expressive characteristics are positively related, there was little difference between males and females in relation to affective sensitivity. These findings suggest that the critical factor is not necessarily gender, but degree of expressive characteristics in the individual. Instrumental and expressive traits are not gender specific, but are dualistic within both males and females. (JD)

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AFFECTIVE SENSITIVITY AS RELATED TO INSTRUMENTALITY AND EXPRESSIVENESS

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Abstract

This study examined the relationships that masculine instrumentality and feminine expressiveness have with affective sensitivity. It was hypothesized in this study that affective sensitivity is inversely related to instrumentality and positively related to expressiveness, when number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization, and gender are controlled. The participants were 65 master and doctoral degree candidates majoring in counseling and student personnel, school psychology, educational psychology, special education, elementary education, and secondary education, enrolled at Oklahoma State University during the fall of 1980. Affective sensitivity was measured by the Affective Sensitivity Scale and instrumentality and expressiveness were measured by the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire. Multiple regression and partial correlation techniques were used to test the hypotheses. The results supported the hypothesis that affective sensitivity is positively related to expressiveness, but did not support the hypothesis that affective sensitivity is inversely related to instrumentalty. The implications of this study for helper preparation programs were discussed.

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted in recent years to determine personality correlates of effectiveness in professional counseling or other helping roles. Because many of these studies have yielded conflicting results, some researchers have argued that the search for personality characteristics predictive of helping effectiveness should be abandoned (Loesch, Crane, & Rucker, 1978; Rowe, Murphy, & De Csipkes, 1975). Despite such arguments many counselor educators persist in their conviction that the personality of the counselor is related to their counseling effectiveness. The same point of view has been expressed by some teacher educators with regard to teaching effectiveness. The question of the relationship between the personality of the helper and indices of his/her effectiveness remains open to further scrutiny.

Several counselor-offered conditions have been found to be facilitative of positive outcomes for clients. Empathy is a variable that has been consistently identified as one of the most important and necessary conditions not only for effective counseling, but for effective teaching as well, i.e., counselor empathy has been found to be related to client improvement, and teacher empathy has been found to be related to student academic achievement and self-concept gains (Aspy, 1975; Truax & Mitchell, 1971; Carkhuff, 1969; Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, & Truax, 1957). Empathy may thus be considered as an essential condition for counselor and teacher effectiveness. Kagan, Krathwohl, & Farquhar (1975) and Kagan, Krathwohl, Goldberg, Campbell, Schauble, Danish, Resnikoff, Bowes, & Bondy (1967) isolated affective sensitivity as a critical component of empathy. Affective sensitivity is restricted to the detection and description of another's feelings. Affective sensitivity is seen as a preliminary and essential skill in the communication of empathy and facilitation of positive outcomes in helping interactions.

Recently much interest has been generated regarding sex-role and its relationship to behavior. Spence (1979)has argued that regardless of gender individuals possess both masculine and feminine personality traits. Masculine traits have been associated with a more instrumental orientation and a more cognitive focus on task completion and problem solving. Feminine traits have been associated with an expressive orientation, and an affective concern for the welfare of others (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Results from previous research have suggested that men and women are perceived as differing in personality characteristics that relate to these domains (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974, 1975). Several studies have proposed the notion that it is possible for an individual to be both masculine and feminine (Parsons & Bales, 1955; Bakan, 1966; Erickson, 1964; Jung, 1953, Bem, 1974, 1976; Spence & Helmreich, 1979a, 1979b, 1979d; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974, 1975; Foushee, Helmreich, & Spence, 1979; Helmreich, Spence, & Holahan, 1979; Holahan & Spence, 1980). The studies by Parsons & Bales (1955) and Bakan (1966) originated the dualistic approach to the measurement of masculinity and femininity. Their research suggests that the constructs of masculinity and femininity have an orthogonal relationship, making it possible to assess independently the degree to which individuals possess these traits.

Spence (1979) and Foushee, Helmreich, & Spence (1979) view instrumentality and expressiveness as personality traits (response predispositions having considerable trans-situational generality), this view being preferable to the view that instrumental and expressive traits are sex role behaviors and expectations (rules governing the social interaction between men and women). They argue that both instrumental and expressive traits are influential in the completion of behavioral tasks. Depending on the demands of a specific task , either instrumental or expressive skills may play a major role. Affective sensitivity as a

task demands that an individual be able to detect and describe the feelings or affective states experienced by others. Given that expressiveness is associated with a more affective orientation, it seems logical that helpers who possess a higher degree of expressiveness would be more successful in the task of accurately identifying the affective states of others than would those helpers who possess a lower degree of expressiveness, i.e., expressiveness would be positively related to affective sensitivity. Furthermore, since instrumentality is associated with a more cognitive than affective orientation, it seems logical that instrumentality and affective sensitivity would be inversely related.

Hypotheses

The specific questions addressed were: Is there a relationship between affective sensitivity and instrumentality and between affective sensitivity and expressiveness? Number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization, and gender were included as covariates to control for their potential effects upon the principal variables under investigation. The research hypotheses for this study were as follows: Affective sensitivity is inversely related to instrumentality, when number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization and gender are controlled. Affective sensitivity is positively related to expressiveness, when number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization, and gender are controlled.

Participants

Participants for the study were 65 masters and doctoral degree candidates majoring in counseling and student personnel, school psychology, educational psychology, special education, elementary education, and secondary education, enrolled at Oklahoma State University during the fall of 1980. The participants

varied in the number of graduate credit hours they had acquired up to, but not including, the fall of 1980 (from 0 to 99 graduate credit hours, with a mean of 18.9). The average age of the participants was 30.4. They were primarily Caucasian, with 58.5% of the sample female and 41.5% of the sample male. Of the participants, 58.5% were counseling majors and the remaining 41.5% were dispersed among the other fields mentioned previously.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study: The Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ) developed by Spence, Helmreich, and Holahan (1979) and the Affective Sensitivity Scale, Form E-A-2 (Kagan & Schneider, 1977).

Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire

The masculine instrumentality and feminine expressiveness of the participants were measured by the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ). The 40-item EPAQ contains the shortened 24-item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) and in addition, two other eight-item scales designed to examine more socially undesirable traits.

The M+ scale of the PAQ items contains socially desirable instrumental traits that are more characteristic of men than women, while the F+ scale contains socially desirable expressive traits more characteristic of women than men. The M-F scale contains items for which social desirability differs for the two sexes.

The 40-item EPAQ contains the three scales described above, and, in addition, contains three new scales identified as M-, Fva- and Fc-. Each of these scales contains items judged to be socially undesirable for both sexes.

Each item of the EPAQ is set up on a five-point scale with verbal labels at either end. Each item is scored from 0 to 4. Only the M+ and F+ scales

were used in this study. Responses to the M+ scale are keyed in a "masculine" direction and responses to the F+ scale in a "feminine" direction. Total scores on each scale are obtained by summing the item scores.

Reliability for the PAQ with the full scale is as follows: Chronbach Alphas (college student population) have been determined to be .85 for the M+ scale, .82 for the F+ scale, and .78 for the M-F scale.

Correlations between the short scale and the original scale in the 55-item PAQ have been calculated (for college students) .93, .93, and .91 for the M+, F+, and M-F scales, respectively.

The construct validity of the PAQ and EPAQ is supported by numerous investigations (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974, 1974; Foushee, Spence, & Helmreich, 1979; Spence & Helmreich, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1979d; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979a, 1979b; Holahan & Spence, 1980). Concurrent validity is supported by studies correlating scores on the PAQ with other scales, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Spence, Helmreich & Holahan, 1979), and the Sex Role Stereotype Questionnaire (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974, 1975). Predictive validity is supported by several studies (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1979; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979a, 1979b; Spence & Holahan, 1980).

Affective Sensitivity Scale

The Affective Sensitivity Scale was used to measure the affective sensitivity of participants. Kagan, Krathwohl, and Farquhar (1965) conceptualized affective sensitivity as "the ability to detect and describe the immediate affective state of another, or in terms of communication theory, the ability to receive and code affective communication" (p. 34). The Affective Sensitivity Scale FormE-A-2 (Kagan & Schneider, 1977) consists of a series of filmed encounters between two or more persons. Scenes have been taken from a wide variety of

interactions, including doctor-patient, informal interactions between friends, teacher-student, group settings, and counseling and psychotherapy. Efforts were made to include men, women, and minority group members in both the interviewer and interviewee roles. The Affective Sensitivity Scale requires the subject to select the item that best identifies the feelings of the helpees and interviewers in the actual interactions. It consists of a 16-minute color film and 65 multiple-choice items, with three alternative statements in each item.

Danish and Kagan (1971) and Campbell, Kagan, and Krathwohl (1971) reported adequate reliability and validity estimates for the earlier version of the Affective Sensitivity Scale. Split-half reliability ranges from .55 to .72. Test-retest reliability for Form D was reported to be .63, for a one week interval. Concurrent validity has been established between Form C and Form E of the scale ($r = .72$). Cronbach's Alpha for an $N = 2{,}000$ for Form D is .72. Investigations to establish the reliability and validity statistics of Form E are currently in progress. It has been argued by previous researchers that validity studies for earlier forms of the instrument may be reasonably assumed to hold true to Form E (Petro & Hansen, 1977). Predictive validity is supported by studies performed using the earlier version (Campbell, Kagan, & Krathwohl, 1971; Danish & Kagan, 1971; Greenberg, Kagan, & Bowes, 1969; Resnikoff, 1972).

Procedures

Data for this study were collected during the first two months of the fall, 1980 academic semester. The data were collected during regularly scheduled classes in the counseling and student personnel and educational psychology programs at Oklahoma State University. Collection of data began with the administration of the Affective Sensitivity Scale to the participants. The participants were told they would be viewing short scenes of actual interpersonal encounters

between two or more individuals in a variety of settings. Participants were asked to identify the feelings of people in the scenes. After the conclusion of each scene, participants were asked to choose the most accurate response from their test booklet and indicate their choice on computer scorable answer sheets. They were given 25 seconds per item to indicate their choice. This procedure was followed for each of the 28 scenes and 65 items. After the completion of the Affective Sensitivity Scale, computer scorable answer sheets were distributed to them for collecting data on the EPAQ. Participants were also instructed to indicate on these answer sheets their gender, area of specialization, and number of graduate credit hours completed to date. They were then given the 40-item EPAQ, and instructed to complete the instrument, indicating their choices on the computer scorable answer sheets.

The answer sheets for the Affective Sensitivity Scale were mailed to Michigan State University and scored by the instrument's developers. The EPAQ was computer scored by a pre-existing key and yielded an numerical score on the M+ and F+ scales for each of the participants.

Multiple regression techniques were employed to test the hypotheses. In addition, partial correlations were computed to examine the relationships between instrumentality and affective sensitivity, and expressiveness and affective sensitivity with number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization, and gender controlled.

Results

Scores from the Affective Sensitivity Scales ranged from 24 to 79, with a mean of 51.83 and a standard deviation of 10.67. Scores from the EPAQ-Instrumentality (M+) Scale ranged from 17 to 36, with a mean of 29.29 and a standard deviation of 4.02. The EPAQ-Expressiveness (F+) Scale yielded scores ranging 17 to 39, with a mean of 31.71 and a standard deviation of 4.52.

Means were also computed for males, females, counselor trainees, and graduate students in other areas of specialization in education. The results were as follows: for males the mean on the Affective Sensitivity Scale was 50.88; for females the mean was 52.51. On the EPAQ-M+ Scale the mean for males was 29.93; for females the mean was 28.84. On the EPAQ-F+ Scale the mean for males was 31.48; for females the mean was 31.87.

Comparing counselor trainees to graduate students in other areas of specialization in education the mean for counselor trainees on the Affective Sensitivity Scale was 54.36; for graduate students in other areas of specialization in education the mean was 48.03. On the EPAQ-M+ Scale for counselor trainees the mean was 28.74; for graduate students in other areas of specialization in education the mean was 30.07. On the EPAQ-F+ Scale the mean for counselor trainees was 31.84; for graduate students in other areas of specialization in education the mean was 31.52.

A Mann-Whitney U was used to test for statistical significance between the means on the Affective Sensitivity Scale, EPAQ-M+ Scale, and EPAQ-F+ Scale comparing first by gender and then by area of specialization in education. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between males and females on affective sensitivity, instrumentality, or expressiveness. There were also no significant differences between counselor trainees and graduate students in other areas of specialization in education in terms of instrumentality and expressiveness. However, a significant difference was found between counselor trainees and graduate students in other areas of specialization in education in affective sensitivity ($p < .05$).

To test the hypotheses of this study, partial correlation coefficients were calculated between affective sensitivity and instrumentality, and affective sensitivity and expressiveness, controlling for the covariates of gender,

area of specialization, and graduate hours completed to date. The partial correlation between affective sensitivity and instrumentality yielded a coefficient of .002, which was not found to be statistically significant. The obtained partial correlation between affective sensitivity and expressiveness was .343, which was significant at the .01 level.

A multiple regression analysis of scores on the Affective Sensitivity Scale was conducted with the covariates (gender, graduate hours completed to date, and area of specialization), and EPAQ-M+ scores entered first in the equation and the EPAQ-F+ scores entered last. Results from this analysis are indicated in Table I. The final R^2 of .179 indicates the covariates and expressiveness accounted for approximately 18% of the variance in Affective Sensitivity Scale scores. Seven percent of the variance in Affective Sensitivity Scale scores was accounted for by the covariates and instrumentality with an increment of 11% contributed by expressiveness. This increment was statistically significant, F (5, 59) = 2.575, $p < .05$. The results of the multiple regression analysis and partial correlation support the hypothesis that affective sensitivity is positively related to expressiveness, when number of graduate credit hours, area of specialization, and gender are controlled. The results of the study did not support the hypothesis that affective sensitivity is inversely related to instrumentality.

TABLE I

SUMMARY TABLE FOR MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS
OF AFFECTIVE SENSITIVITY SCALE SCORES

Variables	Multiple R	R^2	R^2 Change
Gender	.076	.006	.006
Graduate Hours Completed to Date	.142	.020	.014
Area of Specialization	.261	.068	.048
EPAQ-Instrumentality	.261	.068	.000
EPAQ-Expressiveness	.042	.179	.111

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between affective sensitivity, and instrumental/expressive traits or characteristics. Both instrumental and expressive traits are influential in the completion of behavioral tasks. It would seem logical that helpers who possess a higher degree of expressiveness would more effectively complete the task of accurately perceiving affective states than those helpers who possess a lower degree of expressiveness. The results of this study suggest that affective sensitivity and expressive characteristics are positively related. The results also indicated that there are no significant differences between males and females in relation to affective sensitivity, instrumentality, and expressiveness. It might have been logical (due to the differential socialization of males and females) to expect that males would have had higher instrumental scores and lower expressiveness scores, and as a result, lower scores on affective sensitivity, and vice versa for females. However, this was not found to be the case in this study. These findings suggest that the critical factor is not necessarily gender but degree of expressive characteristics as indicated by the positive correlation between affective sensitivity and expressiveness. These results would also appear to support the notion that instrumental and expressive traits are not gender specific, but are indeed dualistic within both males and females.

Similar results were found between counselor trainees and graduate students in other areas of specialization in education. There were no significant differences between counselor trainees and other graduate students in education with regard to instrumental and expressive characteristics. However, significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of affective sensitivity, with counselor trainees possessing a higher degree of affective sensitivity than did graduate students in other areas of specialization in education. The

difference between the two groups with regard to affective sensitivity could be attributed to significant differences in their respective preparation programs.

These results have implications for those in the helping professions with regard to the identification of personality characteristics that could be facilitative of helpee change or growth. While Rogers (1957) has indicated that empathy is a critical element in therapeutic change and Truax (1965) modified Roger's definition of empathy to include the communication process, the results of this study suggest that a helper who possesses a high degree of expressive traits is more likely to be affectively sensitive and empathic. Research has also indicated that those helpers who possess higher levels of empathy are more facilitative of client change (Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, & Truax, 1967). It would seem desirable then to both assess the level of expressiveness in helper trainees as a means of predicting helping effectiveness. The results of the assessments could be used to provide valuable feedback to the helper trainee of his/her potential strengths and weaknesses in the helper role. As Walton and Sweeny (1969) suggest, such results may also be used as part of a self-assessment procedure that equips the prospective helper trainee, "with more information predictive of his success rather than the meager knowledge that he shows promise of successfully completing the academic requirements" (p. 32).

The results of the study support the contention that it is desirable to not only focus on skill acquisition but to examine personality blocks that inhibit facilitative interpersonal functioning (Hackney, 1978). The results of this study indicate that expressiveness in prospective helping professionals is positively associated with the ability to accurately perceive the affective state of others, an ability that is prerequisite to that of communicating accurate

empathy. It would seem advisable to include activities in helper preparation programs that not only assess expressive characteristics but nurture and support their development.

This study had several limitations. Since the participants were students enrolled in only a few classes and since students from the various areas of specialization were not randomly selected for participation, generalizability to the population of counselor trainees, educational psychology graduate students, etc. is limited. Furthermore, it must be stressed that affective sensitivity is only a proximate measure of helper effectiveness. However, it has been considered a prerequisite to the empathic communciation which has been found in previous research to be related to client improvement and student learning/self-concept gains. Further research is needed to determine if helper traits such as expressiveness are related to actual theraputic or learning gains for clients or students.

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